

Travel Report for the National Congress of American Indians Annual Convention

October 21- October 26, 2012

Sunday – Registration and Rules & Credentials

Monday – The First General Assembly begins:

- Call to order by Jefferson Keel, President, NCAI
- Color Guard from the Tule River Native American Veterans
- Honor Song
- Invocation
- California Welcome – Governor Jerry Brown and Darrell Steinberg, State Senator

Rules of The Convention given by Yvonne Oberly, Credentials Committee Chair

Resolutions Process explained by Juanita Ahtone, Resolutions Committee Chair

The President's Address was given by Jefferson Keel

The Executive Directors Report was given by Jacqueline Johnson Pata

Jodi Gillette, Senior Policy Advisor for Native American Affairs for the White House gave the Message from the White House

Message from the US Department of the Interior was given by Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior who also introduced the newly appointed Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Kevin Washburn. Mr. Washburn was formerly the Dean at the University of New Mexico Law School.

An NCAI Press Conference was held through lunch.

The Second General Assembly was called to order by Juana Majol Dixon, First Vice-President of NCAI

There was an Energy update given by Tracy Lebeau, Director of the Office of Indian Energy, US Department of Energy

Romney Presidential Campaign Representative Mark Wyland (R), California State Senator, spoke on the differences and similarities of both the Romney and Obama campaigns.

Rebecca Moore, Outreach Leader, Google Earth gave a presentation on Google Earth and how it is bringing the awareness of Indian Country to everyone around the world.

Obama Presidential Campaign Representative Katherine Archuleta gave an update on the Obama Campaign and its commitment to continue with the Tribal Leadership webinars.

Shawn A-In-Chut Atleo, National Chief, gave the Assembly of First Nations Message

Joe A. Garcia, Constitutional Committee, gave a briefing on the Constitutional Convention coming up yet this year and the suggested amendments to the NCAI, one of the more contested suggestion is the exclusion of non-federally recognized Tribes.

Tuesday - Attended the **Midwest Area Caucus** meeting. Nominations were taken to replace the At Large representative, voting to take place Wednesday morning. Received draft copy of the NCAI Political Platform to be used as a request of the US government for a statement affirming the government to government relations between the United States and Indian tribes; also received a Policy Priorities Survey that shows the NCAI accomplishments of the past four years and requests the input from Tribes as to the focus of the NCAI for the next four years. A discussion took place on the new Indian Health Services Health Board being developed by the Midwest Area of Sovereign Tribes. The Board is a much needed entity that will represent the Bimidjii area at the national level. Currently the Bimidjii area is the largest area that receives IHS funding but still receives the least. A Midwest Health Board would be able to represent the area at the budget table. A presentation was put on by a National Indian Child Welfare Act representative asking for a show of support of the Indian Child Welfare Act during discussions with the Senate and Congress so their cause stays on the top of their minds.

The Third General Assembly was called to order by Edward Thomas, Recording Secretary of the NCAI

Amber Ebarb, Legislative Associate and PRC Program Manager gave a presentation with regard to mobilizing Tribes to protect the federal Indian budget.

Thomas Perez, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division of the US Department of Justice gave an update on the department's accomplishments with regard to the increased protection stance the DOJ is taking on behalf of Indian rights.

A presentation was put on that discussed the use of the Policy Priorities Survey to refine the unified vision of the NCAI. Moderators included Dr. Eddie Brown, Executive Director of the American Indian Policy Institute; Jacqueline Johnson Pata, Executive Director of the NCAI; Kevin Gover, Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of American Indians; Bill Anoatubby, Governor of the Chickasaw Nation; Megan Gregory, Council of Youth Leaders and Gregory Mendoza, Governor of the Gila River Indian Community.

Youth Honor Luncheon – NCAI Leadership Awards were presented by Ernie Stevens, Jr., Chairman of National Indian Gaming Association. The keynote speaker was Billy Mills, 1964 Olympic Gold Medalist

Concurrent Breakout Sessions began.

1:30 – 4:30 pm - I attended the ***Protect Native Money: Financial Skills for the Future***. Moderator Sherry Salway Black, from the NCAI and the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability presented a coordinated national campaign to build financial capability of Native people especially tribal youth. The effort is essential to secure a strong financial future for tribal nations. Recent settlements in Indian Country stress the urgency of protecting Native money by promoting financial education.

Speakers were Shannon Augare, Montana State Senator and member of the Blackfeet Nation Council; James Ramos, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians; Levon Henry, DNA Legal Services; Lyn Haralson Director of Financial Education for the Consumers Financial Protection Bureau; David Burrell President and CEO of Pinnacle Bank and Mike Roberts, President of First Nations Development Institute.

Wednesday – Attended the Midwest Regional Caucus. Election for the At Large Representative; Mary Gibbs of Mille Lacs Bands of Ojibwe was appointed by acclamation. Native Vote was discussed and the importance of Tribes spreading the word to get out and vote. A call for serious consideration for support

of the MAST campaign to develop an Indian Health Board for the Bimidjii area came from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe. We heard from the La Couterie Youth Council requesting Tribes to urge their youth groups to join NABI, a weeklong pre-college summer program for sophomore and junior Native American high school students interested in learning about college and careers in business.

The Fourth General Assembly was called by W. Ron Allen, NCAI Treasurer. Yvonne Oberly, Credentials Committee Chair gave the 2012 Credentials and Membership Report.

Jim Clark President of the Boys and Girls Club of America spoke on the celebration of the 80th Anniversary of the Boys and Girls Club of America along with a short video of activities and opportunities available.

Health and Human Services Update: Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services spoke on the conditions of the entire syllabus of the Department that includes:

Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) Administration for Community Living (ACL)

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

Indian Health Service (IHS)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

National Cancer Institute (NCI) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

George Sheldon, Acting Assistant secretary spoke on the HHS division Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Dr. Yvette Roubideaux Director of Indian Health Services spoke on the possibility of cuts to IHS and Contract Health during this lame duck session and is hopeful the next budget that holds an increase for Indian Country health related issues will be passed right after the election.

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs: Loretta Tuell Staff Director for The Committee shared a video from Senator Daniel K. Akaka who is retiring this year.

Concurrent Breakout Sessions began.

1:30 – 4:30 pm – Attended **Digital Communities: Establishing Effective Communication Outreach;** discussion was over how Tribes can use social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook and Blogs to develop guidelines and protocol for communication outreach. Special emphasis was placed on tribal governance and economic development ventures that have successfully established these communication guidelines, issues regarding cyber-security and network integrity was also addressed.

Speakers:

Rob Jacks, Chief Information Officer, Commerce Division of the Chickasaw Nation

Robert Pollard, Director of Information Technology, Blue Lake Rancheria

Chris Pata, Sr. Systems Administrator, NCAI

Rhonda LeValdo, President of Native American Journalists Association

Thursday - Fifth General Assembly called by Don Arnold, Pacific Area Vice President of NCAI

Youth Commission Report given by the Unity Council President

Constitutional Convention – Voting on the proposed Constitutional Amendments;

the proposed amendment to ban all non-federally recognized Tribes from NCAI was defeated.

Financial Education Director of the Partnership for Tribal Governance for NCAI Sherry Salway Black gave an update on the financial education campaign across Indian Country and how progressive Tribes have developed Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) to help educate their area Tribal community on financial stability and loan processing.

Tax Initiative – Following up Derrick Beetso, staff attorney for NCAI and Dante Desiderio, Executive Director of the Native American Finance Officers Association went on farther to explain how a CDFI can help with Tribal tax issues.

The Intertribal Tax Initiative is a collaborative approach toward addressing tribal tax policy. Since its inception, the group has received great traction with various agencies, Congress and the Administration. However, there is still much to be accomplished in tribal tax policy.

In April 2011, the Miccosukee Tribe hosted the first Native Nations Tribal Leaders Tax Summit. During this summit, NCAI, along with the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) began a partnership to address tribal tax policy. The partnership has since expanded to include the California Association of Tribal Governments (CATG) and the Native American Finance Officers Association (NAFOA).

The working group strives to bring attention to areas in tax policy where Indian tribes agree on the need for reform, either administratively or legislatively. While each of the regional and national organizations involved have addressed tax matters in the past, putting forth a unified voice on tribal tax policy is a more effective approach.

Attended the Elders Honoring Luncheon put on by the NCAI Youth Council who gave examples of how their communities Elders have impressed their lives.

1:30 – 4:30 pm - 6th General Assembly called by Matthew Wesaw, Midwest Area Vice President of NCAI

James Anaya, Rapporteur from the United Nations spoke on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the countries that support it.

Issues and Updates:

Terry Cross, Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare spoke on the needs of Tribes and where to find help for child welfare issues.

Cheryl Causley, Chairperson for the National American Indian Housing Council gave an update on the funding available for Tribal housing and how it may be affected by the lame duck session.

Dr. Heather Shotten President of the National Indian Education Association shared an update on how the funding from Congress is divided up among Tribes and the importance of continued pressure from Tribes to keep requesting more as our youth continue their journey through their educational years.

Ernie Stevens Jr., Chairman of the National Indian Gaming Association spoke on the importance of Tribes exercising their sovereign right to applying for land in trust and the sovereign right of Tribes to exercise self-governance by entering into gaming for Tribal revenue.

Cathy Abramson, Chairperson of the National Indian Health Board spoke on how The Board is pleased to announce our new initiative GO the EXTRA MILE, the result of our Executive Director Stacy A. Bohlen signing the CEO Pledge. The CEO Pledge is part of a national campaign to encourage Executive Directors to commit to supporting and fostering a physically-active workplace. NIHB's GO the EXTRA MILE initiative achieves these goals by creating a workplace that supports physical activity for every member of its staff. Through the GO THE EXTRA MILE with NIHB initiative, staff is required to walk at least one mile each day for a year. We will aggregate these miles and "virtually" walk to each of the 12 Indian Health Service Areas, either to an Area Indian Health Board or to a Tribal Partner in Areas that do not have a Board.

LeRoy Shingoitewa Chairman of the Hopi spoke on how their Tribal Council voted to adopt a new criminal code on August 28, thereby scrapping a 1970s version that all but failed to punish sex crimes and limited tribal prosecutors to one-year terms, even for murder. In doing so, the small Arizona tribe emerged as a leader in Indian country when it comes to criminal prosecution. The new Hopi code incorporates standards outlined in the Tribal Law and Order Act, approved by Congress in 2010. For tribes that will adopt it, the Act offers new tools for addressing crimes, especially violent felonies, which have been on the rise in Indian country and far exceed the national average. It gives more authority to tribal prosecutors – and more flexibility to tribal judges – when it comes to sentencing offenders. The Chairman urged all Tribes to enforce the sovereignty of their boundaries by adopting a similar code.

Attended the Annual Gala Banquet sponsored by Bank of America, hosted by Jefferson Keel and featured Mitch Factor, a Native American Comedian.